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ABSTRACT

This report presents the recommendations of a New York State task force that addressed ways to enhance access to higher education for individuals with disabilities. Individual focus groups developed strategies in five areas: (1) preparation and readiness for college-level study, (2) funding streams, (3) faculty education and instruction, (4) assistive technology and other supports, and (5) student success and employment. Among findings of these groups were that campuses have improved dramatically in the area of physical access; the number of students who report a learning disability has increased by 264 percent since 1987; and a disproportionate number of postsecondary students with disabilities choose two-year community colleges rather than four-year colleges. The Task Force identified nine broad goals and recommended strategies including the following: improving the preparation for high school students with disabilities and their families; providing training and professional development for faculty; raising the level of disability awareness of top college administrators; reflecting goals of universal design and access in college and university strategic plans; enhancing and developing new funding streams; and implementing regionalized approaches to assessment, career and educational counseling and assistive technology evaluation services. Seven appendices provide background information, data and charts, lists of persons involved, and guidelines for assistive technology transfers. (DB)

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Postsecondary Education and Individuals With Disabilities:

Recommendations to New York State for Strategies to Increase Access and Opportunity

Report of the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities

March 2000

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POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO NEW YORK STATE FOR STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Report of the Task Force on
Postsecondary Education and Disabilities with
Comments from the Expert Panel, Presidents' Panel,
Regional Public Forums and Task Force Steering Committee

March 2000

The Board of Regents and the State Education Department
The State University of New York
The City University of New York
Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities
Association of Proprietary Colleges

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FOREWORD

Equal educational access and opportunity for all is the one unequivocal underlying value that is reflected throughout this report. The goals and strategies set forth in this report belong to all of us. Working together we can provide for New Yorkers with disabilities the opportunity to tap into their deep energy, talent and resolve in ways that will enrich all of New York.

This report represents the hard work and best thinking of dozens of experts from the education, disabilities advocacy, social services and business worlds. It is the product of exhaustive research, extensive consultation and comprehensive statewide public forums. The strategies recommended were widely discussed and debated. Frequently the debate was heated. Even as the report is released, the debate continues. In fact, such debate is both healthy, and a deliberate by-product of the work done by the Task Force. With a subject that inspires such passion and commitment, it is not surprising that the discussion and debate over how to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education would inspire wide-ranging, deep and honestly held opinions.

In the months ahead there will be extensive debate and discussion about the strategies presented in the following pages. We will wrestle with the issues of who is responsible and who should be held accountable for the outcomes outlined in the report as we move into the implementation stage. That is to be expected and encouraged; the strategies herein are not prescriptive or set in stone. Rather, they are meant to serve as a range of initial action aimed at beginning the hard and rewarding work of making the vision of equal educational access and opportunity for all a reality in New York State.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When I went to college in the 1960s, there was only one building I could go into with my wheelchair and I had every course for four years in that one building. The rest of the campus was off limits for me. If it wasn't for my buddies on the basketball team carrying me around, my college experience would have been pretty bleak. It wasn't until twenty-five years later when I returned for a reunion that I was able to see the rest of the campus on my own.

For the student who wrote this story, going to college in New York State held a promising future. At that time, he was the only student on campus using a wheelchair. He was able to overcome the barriers and the challenges he had to face to graduate. What about the thousands of high school graduates with disabilities who want the same opportunity today? Is New York State prepared to educate them and give them the freedom to participate fully in every aspect of campus life?

In the fall of 1998, the top leadership of the state's higher education sectors convened with the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department to address this critically important issue of enhancing access to higher education for individuals with disabilities in New York State. That leadership included the Chancellor of the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education representing the New York State Education Department; the Chancellors from both the State University of New York and the City University of New York; and the Presidents of both the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities and the Association of Proprietary Schools. It was an unprecedented event, with an unprecedented mission: to charge the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities with developing a global vision and strategies

to enhance access and encourage full participation of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education.

Several trends in the area of disabilities and higher education indicate that the time for such an effort is right. For more than a decade, the number of students with disabilities earning high school diplomas in New York State has been increasing. For the 1997-1998 school year, 9,405 students with disabilities graduated from New York high schools. Of these graduates, 58 percent reported that they had plans to continue to some postsecondary educational institution, either a four-year or two-year college (see Appendix B). In comparison, nearly 83 percent of students without disabilities in New York State go on to some form of postsecondary education. While New York is making good progress on increasing the numbers (and percentages) of students with disabilities who graduate from high school, there is significant room for improvement in developing strategies for ensuring that more of those graduates go on to postsecondary education.

While New York is making good progress on increasing numbers (and percentages) of students with disabilities who graduate from high school, there is significant room for improvement . . . for ensuring that more of those graduates go on to postsecondary education.

Appendix B of this report describes the population of students with disabilities along with trends in graduation and college participation in New York State. These statistics provide the baseline by which New York will be judged in upcoming years on how it does in achieving the single most important goal of the Task Force: to increase access and opportunity for all those individuals in the state who have achieved the skill and knowledge to continue on to postsecondary education.

To accomplish this goal, the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities developed a vision: all students with disabilities who have acquired knowledge and skills to benefit from a higher education experience will have full access and opportunity; and a mission: to develop a set of strategies for higher education to enhance full participation of individuals with disabilities. The vision and mission guided its research and deliberations for almost a full year. To accomplish its mission, the Task Force created individual focus groups to develop strategies in five key areas:

- preparation and readiness for college-level study;
- funding streams;
- faculty education and instruction;
- assistive technology and other supports; and
- student success and employment.

What the focus groups found was both encouraging and enlightening. Campuses have improved dramatically in the area of physical access (mainly due to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990) for students with hearing impairments and those students using wheelchairs. However, from 1987 to 1997 the percentage of students in higher education institutions who report a learning disability increased by 264.2 percent from 3,553 in 1987 to 12,939 in 1997 (see Appendix B, Figure 1). Today, students with learning disabilities make up the largest percentage of students with disabilities (see Appendix B). This creates new challenges in both how disabilities are detected and evaluated, and in the whole concept of how "accommodation" is now viewed.

Other findings of the focus groups include the importance of community colleges in the education of students with disabilities. Of the 30,889 students enrolled in postsecondary education in 1997, 10,596 (over 34 percent) were enrolled in community colleges. Almost 35 percent of college students with disabilities were enrolled in 19 percent of postsecondary institutions in New York State (see Appendix B, Population of College Students with Disabilities). These findings raise questions such as, why do so many students with disabilities choose two-year colleges over four-year and how many of these students actually go on to four-year colleges?

The Task Force concluded that research models need to be developed in order to measure more meaningful outcomes for students with disabilities and that baseline data need to be collected for each outcome. There is a need to be better able to analyze the factors contributing to student success and the extent to which this success is related to ac-

ademic experience. More information is needed on job placement, time on the job, job satisfaction and employer satisfaction.

In making its recommendations, the Task Force tried to avoid prescription and mandate. Rather, the recommendations include strategies that develop better information exchange, offer incentives and provide both the education and disabilities communities with broad assessment and evaluation tools that will both guide and gauge improvement in the entire area of full participation. While some of the recommendations will require additional funds to be effectively implemented, the Task Force has focused on enhancing and leveraging existing systems, mechanisms and programs, rather than creating new ones.

The strategies outlined in the report will require thinking in a new, forward and comprehensive way about how to make postsecondary education a reality for all New Yorkers with the determination to succeed.

The following nine goals developed by the Task Force represent the vision and strategies necessary to accomplish the critical work that has only just begun with the release of this report. The report includes strategies and specific outcomes that will allow New York State to gauge its progress in enhancing postsecondary opportunities. To make such progress, a full range of stakeholders needs to engage in this important work: educators, government officials, businesses, service providers, families and individuals with disabilities. The strategies outlined in the report will require thinking in a new, forward and comprehensive way about how to make postsecondary education a reality for all New Yorkers with the determination to succeed.

Goal One:

Individuals with disabilities, regardless of age, have access to learning opportunities that prepare them for college study and to the tools and resources needed to succeed in postsecondary education settings.

Goal Two:

New York State's colleges and universities commit to expanding access and opportunity for qualified students with identified disabilities, and that com-

mitment includes a powerful push toward the ongoing development of positive campus-wide and faculty-wide attitudes toward the capabilities of students with disabilities.

Goal Three:

Faculty and staff have ready access and the incentive to utilize the resources they need that will enable them to teach and work more effectively with students with disabilities.

Goal Four:

Students with disabilities and institutions of postsecondary education work together to ensure that campus-wide technology meets universal design standards, and that students have ready access to the full range of appropriate assistive technologies they need to be successful in their coursework and general fields of study.

Goal Five:

College students with disabilities have access to the full range of strategies, programs and counseling aimed at developing knowledge and skills to assist them in achieving post-academic success, including satisfying careers and jobs.

Goal Six:

The New York State postsecondary education community fosters the development of regional collaboratives and partnerships offering a full range of services and technical assistance to students with disabilities, their families and secondary and postsecondary education institutions.

Goal Seven:

Accreditation and review bodies continue to develop and enhance standards, policies and procedures for the comprehensive assessment of institutional effectiveness with regard to access to and diversity of programs and services to students with disabilities.

Goal Eight:

Institutions of postsecondary education, families and students with disabilities have access to a broad array of financial tools to promote success in college.

Goal Nine:

New York State, through the Board of Regents, establishes a standing Steering Committee made up of leadership of the four university sectors, the State Education Department and leaders in secondary education to guide ongoing research, policy development and assessment.

The recommended strategies cover a broad range of themes including: improving the preparation of high school students with disabilities and their families; providing training and professional development for faculty; raising the level of disability awareness to top college administration levels; reflecting goals of universal design and access in college and university strategic plans; enhancing and developing new funding streams; and implementing regionalized approaches to assessment, career, educational counseling and assistive technology evaluation services.

Some of the key **strategies** recommended are as follows:

- The Board of Regents reissues its policy on transition and convenes a summit of leaders in the secondary and postsecondary education systems to refocus on transition planning.
- Students with disabilities are provided access to counseling on a full range of academic and career opportunities open to them, including distance learning options and alternatives to traditional degree programs.
- Postsecondary education institutions actively recruit students with disabilities. Such a proactive approach includes specially designed transition programs available on campus for students on

how to succeed in a higher education setting. This approach includes bridge programs that would allow students with disabilities, starting as early as middle school, to visit college campuses and involve themselves in postsecondary curriculum opportunities.

- New York's postsecondary education institutions review their entire planning process to make sure they reflect and are consistent with the goals of universal design and access, and include experts in the field of disability access in this planning.
- Faculty include accessibility issues when designing new courses and programs of study.
- The New York State Education Department, with the four education sectors, creates a website through which colleges and universities can disseminate and share information on the ongoing training and professional development of all faculty, staff, administration, professional and support staff in working with and teaching students with disabilities.
- The New York Dormitory Authority creates a revolving loan fund through bond sales that allows students with disabilities and/or institutions to buy or lease necessary assistive technology.
- Colleges and universities work with school districts to establish appropriate mechanisms and guidelines to facilitate students' transfer of assistive technology from secondary to postsecondary institutions.
- The State Education Department ensures that the vocational rehabilitation system, in conjunction with colleges and universities, develops a systemic approach to serving eligible college students with disabilities in a timely fashion consistent with the policies adopted by the New York State Board of Regents in November 1996.

- The Governor and Legislature work together to initiate a new funding program to offer grants to every SUNY, CUNY, independent institution and degree-granting proprietary institution in New York State to address the needs of students with disabilities on their campuses. The Task Force recommends that a $15 million "Fund for the Improvement of Disability Services" is created for the grants.
- Financial bond selling agencies, such as the Dormitory Authority of New York or other similar agencies, develop low-interest borrowing mechanisms to increase the availability of low-cost lending opportunities for colleges and universities wishing to invest in accessibility infrastructure.
- The Board of Regents appoints a steering committee made up of representatives from all the university sectors, the secondary education community, the disability community, business and government to monitor progress on the goals and outcomes outlined in the report.

It is the fervent hope of the Task Force that this report will become the roadmap by which individuals with disabilities in New York State will significantly expand their educational and career horizons.

The report of the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities contains comments from a panel of national experts in various fields, a panel of College Presidents representing the four university sectors and the Task Force Steering Committee. The members of these groups are listed in the report along with background information, supporting data and charts and definitions of terms used in the report.

It is the fervent hope of the Task Force that this report will become the roadmap by which individuals with disabilities in New York State will significantly expand their educational and career horizons.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

access

Provisions to ensure that no otherwise qualified student will be excluded from academic programs or services (i.e., web sites, distance learning courses, contracts for services such as health insurance), nor will there be architectural barriers (i.e., transportation on campus, ability to enter classrooms, gymnasiums, dormitories) or attitudinal barriers (i.e., arbitrary limits on participation in courses, recreation or other extracurricular activities) on campus.

adaptive equipment

Devices, aids, controls, appliances or supplies of either a communication or adaptive type, determined necessary to enable the person to increase his or her ability to function in a home and community based setting with independence and safety.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Signed into law to protect individuals with disabilities against discrimination in employment; in programs operated by city, county and state entities; public and private transportation, public accommodations and telecommunication services.

assistive technology

Item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities.

assessment

The process of describing, collecting, recording, scoring and interpreting information about a student's learning.

Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH)

A unit within the New York State Department of Family Services that provides rehabilitation services to individuals who are legally blind and reside in New York State. CBVH programs include: training for employment; programs for older adults; programs for children; and the Business Enterprise Program.

City University of New York (CUNY)

The largest urban university in the United States and its third-largest public university system. CUNY includes 10 senior colleges, six community colleges, a four-year technical college, a doctoral-granting graduate school, a law school, an accelerated medical program and a medical school.

degree-granting proprietary colleges

Sole proprietorships, associations, partnerships, or business corporations that operate for profit. They offer degrees only if the Board of Regents grants them the authority to do so. Such authorization is granted individually for each degree title.

disability services coordinator

The person on a campus of a postsecondary institution responsible for advocating for services for students with disabilities.

distance learning

Formal learning activity in which the student is separated by a distance from the source of the instruction, and usually from the associated support services (e.g., library, academic advising) as well. Most but not all distance learning involves the use of one or more technological delivery systems, such as satellite delivery of video or computer communication.

financial tools

Any options available to deliver enhanced benefits to students in the form of financial aid, loans, grants, institutional supports, scholarships and support services from institutions and government.

functional limitation (for vocational purposes)

Measurable impediment directly related to an employment outcome resulting from the individual's disability in such areas as: communication, interpersonal skills, cognition, mobility, self-care, self-direction, work tolerance or work skills.

higher education

Postsecondary education; includes the work of colleges, junior colleges, community colleges, two-year colleges, universities, professional and technical schools and other degree-granting institutions.

independent college (institution)

A not-for-profit entity chartered by the New York State Board of Regents to grant degrees. An independent institution's charter defines its legal authority with respect to the location and scope of its programs of study and degree(s) it may award.

individual with a disability

Under ADA, an individual with a "disability":

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities;
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

Major life activities include such functions as caring for oneself, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and/or working.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
Makes it possible for states and localities to receive federal funds to assist in the education of students with disabilities. Basically, in order to remain eligible for Federal funds under the law, states must assure the following:

- All children and youth with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, will receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) at public expense.
- Education of children and youth with disabilities will be based on a complete and individual evaluation.
- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed for every child or youth found eligible for special education.
- To the maximum extent appropriate, all children and youth with disabilities will be educated in the regular education environment.
- The rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected.

initial degree program
The first college degree program the institution is authorized by the Regents to offer.

junior college or two-year college
A higher education institution authorized by the Regents to offer undergraduate curricula below the baccalaureate level which normally lead to the associate degree.

learning disability
A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations.

New York State Board of Regents

Governing body for education in New York State. The Board of Regents and the State Education Department govern education from pre-kindergarten to graduate school. The Board is constitutionally responsible for setting educational policy, standards and rules — and legally required to ensure that the entities overseen carry out these policies, standards and rules.

New York State Dormitory Authority

A public benefit corporation. Its purpose is to finance and build facilities for higher education, health care providers, and certain nonprofit institutions and public agencies.

New York State Education Department

Responsible for general supervision of all educational institutions in the state, for operating certain educational and cultural institutions, and for certifying teachers and certifying or licensing practitioners of 38 professions. The Department's supervisory activities include chartering all educational institutions in the state, including schools, libraries and historical societies; developing and approving school curricula; accrediting college and university programs; allocating state and federal financial aid to schools; and providing and coordinating vocational rehabilitation services. The State Education Department is governed by the 16-member Board of Regents.

reasonable modification

As defined in the ADA may include:

- Making existing facilities readily accessible and usable by parents, children and employees with disabilities;
- Provision of additional staff training;
- Provision of certain adaptive equipment;

- Curriculum adaptations; and
- Revision of policies and procedures.

Rehabilitation Act

Prohibits federal agencies and their grantees and contractors from discriminating against people based on disability in employment, programs and activities.

remedial course

A course that concentrates on the acquisition of knowledge at pre-college levels. Such courses do not carry college credit.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (ADA/504)

A federal statute that guarantees the rights of disabled people to equal opportunity in all programs and activities which receive federal financial assistance. It prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals solely on the basis of handicap. Section 504 regulations apply to state education agencies, elementary and secondary school systems, colleges and universities, libraries, vocational schools and state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

State University of New York (SUNY)

A unified system of public higher education with 64 campuses enrolling close to 400,000 students. It is the nation's largest single, most diverse, multi-campus higher education system. SUNY comprises a unique system of community colleges, two-year colleges of technology, specialized and statutory colleges, traditional four-year colleges, research university campuses and academic health science centers.

transition services

A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including

supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

universal design for learning

A concept under which the needs of the widest possible range of potential users of any product or entity (e.g., a curriculum or a course design) are considered and accommodated as the product or entity is being conceived and designed.

Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)

A program division of the New York State Education Department that provides services for people with disabilities from birth through adulthood. Services include early childhood information and referral, preschool special education, school age special education, independent living and vocational rehabilitation.

PART I

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND DISABILITIES

NEW YORK STATE'S STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Goals and strategies

New York State, through a partnership with the Board of Regents, State University of New York, City University of New York, Commission of Independent Colleges and Universities, and the Association of Proprietary Colleges, will develop the necessary legislation, regulations and policy, funding items and administrative mechanisms to address the following goals and strategies:

1. Preparation for postsecondary education opportunities

Discussion

National data indicate that in raising the educational aspirations and expectations of individuals with disabilities, reaching them early is critical. According to a recent U.S. Department of Education study, students with disabilities are significantly less likely than students without disabilities to consider the possibility of college. Furthermore, students with disabilities are "less likely to be prepared" when it comes to handling college-level coursework, according to the report. Students with disabilities are also much more likely to enroll in two-year colleges rather than four-year colleges and universities. New York State data indicate that over 37 percent of all college students with disabilities are enrolled in the state's community colleges. At the same time, statistics tell us that individuals with disabilities frequently return to college a number of years after leaving high school and that, in general, individuals with disabilities avail themselves of more nontraditional avenues for achieving their high school diplomas, (e.g., High School Equivalency Diplomas). Any

National data indicate that in raising the educational aspirations and expectations of individuals with disabilities, reaching them early is critical.

strategies aimed at boosting the participation of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education need to consider both students in secondary school and also adults who might want to return to school.

Goal One

Goal One

Individuals with disabilities, regardless of age, have access to learning opportunities that prepare them for college study and to the tools and resources needed to succeed in postsecondary education settings.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- The Board of Regents reissues its policy on transition and convenes a summit of leaders in secondary and postsecondary systems to refocus on transition planning, emphasizing the following:
  - Students entering colleges or universities provide clear, concise, practical and current documentation of their disability that is acceptable to postsecondary education institutions, and that clearly states the students' functional limitations. Such documentation is used as the basis for the design of the college experience; including the most appropriate use of assistive technology. The documentation moves smoothly with the student. Policies are implemented that allow assistive or adaptive technology to move with students from secondary schools to colleges or universities, when appropriate.
  - Adults with disabilities wishing to engage in postsecondary education are provided access to information, resources, programs and services regarding postsecondary education and ready access to alternatives for acquiring their high school diplomas.
  - Students with disabilities are provided access to counseling on the full range of academic and

career opportunities open to them, including distance learning options and alternatives to traditional degree programs.

- Skills and job-related competencies regarding transition planning for students with disabilities are infused within existing curriculum during secondary education.

- Specific information on transition is offered to students with disabilities and families to make them aware of the range of services and opportunities available, and how to access these opportunities. Emphasis is on the change in status of students with disabilities once they leave secondary schools (i.e., they will no longer be in an entitlement program), new responsibilities and, in some instances, new costs that students and their families will accrue in postsecondary institutions. The information could be offered through seminars, continuing education, community colleges and Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRCs).

- Families of students with disabilities are involved and engaged in the process of assessment, career and educational counseling, keeping in mind that student independence and choice become a central issue for students as they move through postsecondary education.

- Guidelines aimed at transition to college are developed and made available in middle and high school to all students with disabilities. The guidelines are also available to adults who wish to continue their education beyond high school. These guidelines reinforce the message that "accommodation" in an educational setting does not mean that academic standards are lowered.

Goal One

Goal One

- Postsecondary education institutions actively recruit students with disabilities. Such a proactive approach includes specially designed transition programs available on campus for students on how to succeed in a higher education setting. This approach includes bridge programs that would allow students with disabilities, starting as early as middle school, to visit college campuses and involve themselves in postsecondary curriculum opportunities.
- Secondary and postsecondary institutions work with the State Education Department to review funding opportunities, through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for individuals under age 21, and through vocational rehabilitation, to cover summer preparation courses and programs.

Outcomes

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the percentage of students with disabilities with high school diplomas, or the equivalent, admitted to postsecondary education institutions in New York State will increase.

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the percentage of returning adults with disabilities admitted to postsecondary education institutions will increase.

2. Institutional commitment within postsecondary education

Discussion

The number of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education has nearly tripled in the past 20 years. According to a 1993 study of 700 students enrolled in 57 different colleges nationwide, which appeared in the *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, summer 1998 (Stebnicki, et al.), over half expressed satisfaction with their accommodations and services, physical accessibility of new buildings, availability of special equipment, and class-

The number of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education has nearly tripled in the past 20 years.

room, curriculum and registration modifications. Yet at the same time, many students still described architectural barriers, limited availability of tutors and notetakers, difficulty obtaining taped or Braille materials, readers, sign language interpreters and other types of assistance and equipment. Many students were actually unaware of the services, or reported that when requested, services and accommodations were received late.

Students with disabilities drop out of college at a much higher rate than students without disabilities.

Students with disabilities drop out of college at a much higher rate than students without disabilities. About one-half of all students with disabilities drop out, compared to about one-third of students without disabilities, according to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics. While much could be done at the secondary school level to ready students for the college experience — and New York has made measurable progress in this area — it is clear that much more needs to be done by colleges and universities themselves to ensure that individuals with disabilities view postsecondary education as a real possibility and succeed once they have enrolled.

The benefit to colleges and universities of recommitting to enrolling and graduating students with disabilities is obvious: a broader pool of talented applicants from which to choose; but also a more diverse campus, a diversity that offers all students both a more invigorating educational experience, and more direct experience in dealing with the sort of diversity that operating in our global economy now demands. It is interesting to note, though, that students with disabilities make very concrete contributions besides adding to the overall academic and campus life experience at colleges and universities. Nationally, according to the U.S. Department of Education, college students with disabilities devote more time to volunteer activities than students without disabilities, even as they participate equally in extracurricular activities from clubs and social events to athletics.

Unfortunately, today some of New York's best and brightest students choose out-of-state institutions that do understand the contributions that students with disabili-

ties make to academic and campus life, and that actively advertise their openness and accessibility as a way to recruit talented students with disabilities. According to SUNY's 1996 report, *Student Migration and the State University*, the fall 1994 migration of New York State residents to attend college out of state was 25,989 for first-time, full-time students. To stem the flow of such students out of New York, and to tap the pool of talented students that exists here, all of the state's institutions of postsecondary education should reevaluate their commitment to openness and access by taking a new look at all aspects of their recruitment, academic and nonacademic programs, faculty and staff training programs and other policies with an eye toward building a vibrant base of students that more truly reflects our society's diversity.

Goal Two

New York State's colleges and universities commit to expanding access and opportunity for qualified students with identified disabilities, and that commitment includes a powerful push toward the ongoing development of positive campus-wide and faculty-wide attitudes toward the capabilities of students with disabilities.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- The entire postsecondary education community, including all four sectors, works together with the vocational rehabilitation community, and other appropriate service agencies, to expand and develop strategies to address the increased challenges and resources associated with increased enrollment of students with disabilities.
- The Office of the Coordinator of Disability Services on each campus reports to a high-level office in the administration, giving it a more central location and allowing others to view it as a valued program. These services become an integrated part of other general services provided to

students, such as financial aid and career planning.

- All colleges and universities develop, within their strategic planning process, comprehensive strategies to address the full range of accessibility issues, from admissions and orientation policies, to infrastructure improvement, provision of support services, faculty training and career development; thereby addressing issues at senior decision-making levels.
- Colleges and universities ensure that all faculty and staff have access to the tools and equipment they need to effectively meet the educational needs of students with disabilities.
- New York's institutions of postsecondary education review their entire planning processes to make sure they reflect and are consistent with the goals of universal design and access, and include experts in the field of disability access in this planning.
- Institutions of postsecondary education develop a "disability impact statement" requirement for all major policy initiatives and purchases, including the purchase of educational technology equipment.
- Institutions of postsecondary education include issues related to access and success of students with disabilities as a primary consideration when making significant program or policy decisions, whether in the area of recruitment and admissions, curriculum, infrastructure or general campus life.
- Colleges and universities work to expand the capacity within each separate office and program – from financial aid, to academic or career counseling – to work directly with students with disabilities rather than expecting an office of disability services to handle such specific tasks.

Goal Two

. . . all of the state's institutions of postsecondary education should reevaluate their commitment to openness and access by taking a new look at all aspects of their recruitment, academic and nonacademic programs. . . .

Outcomes

The percentage of New York State's institutions of postsecondary education that have a specific and formal planning component addressing universal design and access by the next comprehensive plan cycle will increase.

The number of college and university students who self-report as having one, or more, disability (ies) will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of individuals who achieve their personal educational goals, by completing a certificate program, specific coursework, two-year, four-year or postgraduate study, will increase over the next five years.

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the percentage of students with disabilities who transfer from two-year institutions into four-year institutions will increase.

3. Capacity of all campus personnel and students to work with and teach students with disabilities

Discussion

Faculty, staff and students play a key role in creating an environment, not only in the classroom, but campus-wide, that allows students with disabilities to succeed. Stronger efforts on the part of colleges and universities to educate faculty and staff would significantly enhance the likelihood of academic success of students with disabilities. Unfortunately, faculty and staff development programs are chronically underfunded and frequently do not represent comprehensive planning. Consequently, disability awareness programs tend to be fragmented. A survey by Stebnicki, et al., published in the *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, summer 1998, indicates that nationally only about one-quarter of all disability service office program coordinators have special budget allocations to promote disability awareness on their campuses.

Faculty, staff and students play a key role in creating an environment, not only in the classroom, but campus-wide, that allows students with disabilities to succeed.

With a handful of notable exceptions, little priority is given to building the capacity of faculty and staff at institu-

tions of postsecondary education to teach students with disabilities in New York State. There is not enough attention devoted to teaming up students without disabilities to work with students with disabilities as a way to enrich the educational and campus experience for both. Faculty, staff and college students without disabilities are frequently not equipped to offer students with disabilities full access to the most rigorous coursework possible. In addition, training on how to accommodate disabilities is not available at every postsecondary education institution. Faculty, staff and the general student body do not have regular or easy access to the technical assistance and training that they might need on an ad hoc basis, and the assistance to customize specific coursework for the student and disability in question. Access to episodic training and access to technical assistance are two of the key elements in creating an overall educational environment that encourages a close working relationship between students with disabilities and campus personnel.

. . . faculty and staff development programs are chronically underfunded and frequently do not represent comprehensive planning.

Goal Three

Faculty and staff have ready access and the incentive to utilize the resources they need that will enable them to teach and work more effectively with students with disabilities.

Goal Three

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- The New York State Education Department, in conjunction with postsecondary education institutions, faculty and staff professional organizations, co-sponsors regional professional development seminars/ workshops highlighting innovative teaching, effective accommodation practices and model student disability support programs.
- The New York State Education Department, with the four education sectors, creates a website through which colleges and universities can disseminate and share information on the ongoing

Goal Three

training and professional development of all faculty, staff, administration, professional and support staff in working with and teaching students with disabilities.

- Faculty and staff need greater awareness of assistive technology benefits, options and available campus supports. Postsecondary institutions need to deliver training in assistive technologies for professional development of faculty and staff. They also need to provide faculty and staff with information on specific assistive technology options (i.e., what is available on campus and how systems can be adapted for use to address specific students' needs).
- New York State, through this partnership, creates clear avenues whereby faculty can, on an ad hoc basis, access general and specific disability-related information and technical assistance in teaching students with disabilities.
- Faculty include accessibility issues when designing new courses and programs of study.
- Colleges and universities explore the creation or expansion of work-study opportunities and/or credit-bearing possibilities in order to build a system of mutual and natural supports among all students in all aspects of college life, from coursework to extracurricular activities.
- Postsecondary education systems work with professional organizations and unions representing faculty and staff to ensure that providing services to students with disabilities becomes a standard feature of professional training and development.

Stronger efforts on the part of colleges and universities to educate faculty and staff would significantly enhance the likelihood of academic success of students with disabilities.

Outcomes

The percentage of universities and colleges that include professional development and technical assistance to fac-

ulty and staff in the area of teaching and providing services to students with disabilities in their planning and assessment processes will increase over the next five years.

The number of faculty and staff who report favorably that they had access to professional training courses will increase over the next five years.

4. Universal design and access through assistive technology

Discussion

It has been said that assistive technology creates for those with disabilities a sense of possibility. The right type of technology applied in the right situation can make the difference between success and failure, whether in a college course or in a career. It is critical that students with disabilities, in conjunction with assessment, education and career counseling, have access to the full range of assistive technologies and services that will open that real world of possibility to them.

. . . assistive technology creates for those with disabilities a sense of possibility.

The world of technology is changing quickly. That can be both good and bad for students with disabilities. While progress in assistive technology forges ahead, society's increasing reliance on technology, generally, can actually serve to further isolate those individuals with disabilities without the means or the tools to tap into new technologies. The growing use of web-based and CD-ROM-based learning materials, for example, means that some students with disabilities might be missing out on the latest in educational tools, unless materials are also provided in alternate formats (including Braille and audio tape), or unless such technology is adapted so it can be used by the greatest number of students possible.

The degree to which campuses deal with the issue of technology is uneven. Some assistive technologies can be integrated into existing or future campus-wide systems, while others have to be leased or purchased for individuals on a case-by-case basis – and even a course-by-course basis.

It is critical that students with disabilities, in conjunction with assessment, education and career counseling, have access to the full range of assistive technologies and services that will open that real world of possibility to them.

It is critical, therefore, that institutions of postsecondary education, to the greatest extent possible, ensure that campus technology is accessible by adhering to universal design standards; specific avenues exist for making it accessible to students with disabilities; and students have access to information on the latest in individual assistive technology to ensure they get the most out of their education.

Goal Four

Goal Four

Students with disabilities and institutions of postsecondary education work together to ensure that campus-wide technology meets universal design standards, and that students have ready access to the full range of appropriate assistive technologies they need to be successful in their coursework and general fields of study.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- The State Education Department, working with the rest of the state's postsecondary education community, identifies the most appropriate site for a single clearinghouse on assistive technology.
- Institutions of postsecondary education create assistive technology integration committees that include individuals with disabilities.
- In conjunction with the assistive technology committees, institutions of postsecondary education develop guidelines to ensure vendors are aware of accessibility requirements for products and services, including video material, computers, websites and multi-media resources, and all other forms of instructional material.
- Colleges and universities, working with the State's vocational rehabilitation programs, provide students with disabilities ready access to the assessment tools used to determine the most ap-

propriate assistive technologies, given their academic and career goals.

- The New York State Education Department develops linkages to websites devoted to offering students and school officials up-to-date information on assistive technology, including information on purchasing, leasing, borrowing and financing such technology.
- Colleges and universities work with school districts to establish appropriate mechanisms and guidelines to facilitate students' transfer of assistive technology from secondary to postsecondary institutions, in accordance with the New York State Comptroller's July 1996 ruling allowing such technology transfer (see Appendix G).
- The New York Dormitory Authority creates a revolving loan fund through bond sales that allows students with disabilities and/or institutions to buy or lease necessary assistive technology.
- The Steering Committee, working with colleges and universities, establishes mechanisms for cooperative purchase arrangements that allow colleges and universities to lower costs of assistive technology, site licenses and service agreements.
- Colleges and universities develop guidelines for the integration of assistive technology into their technology plan in ways that ensure universal design and access in a timely manner.
- Colleges and universities assess the impact of college technology purchases and upgrades on access prior to purchase or upgrade.

Goal Four

The degree to which campuses deal with the issue of technology is uneven.

Outcomes

The number of colleges and universities that have a formal component in their overall campus technology plans that addresses universal design and access will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of students who report favorably on access and accommodation around campus technology, and in being able to acquire special technologies they need in order to successfully complete coursework and participate in campus life will increase over the next five years.

5. Career development and full employment opportunity

Discussion

In this increasingly competitive global economy, no state can afford to squander talent or energy. However, there appears to be a gulf between employers and individuals with disabilities. Companies do not, as a matter of course, consider individuals with disabilities when recruiting and hiring. Furthermore, evidence suggests that employers do not typically know how to accommodate a disability and so they shy away from active recruitment. Colleges and universities could be a powerful force for change in this regard.

. . . there appears to be a gulf between employers and individuals with disabilities. . . . Companies do not, as a matter of course, consider individuals with disabilities when recruiting and hiring.

Students with disabilities often do not have full access to out-of-classroom programming, so they have not been able to take advantage of the full range of job and career preparation programs. As a result, they may not be as ready to make the transition from their college or university program to work. Part of the problem is that too often disability services coordinators are given the job of providing all counseling services to students with disabilities, including career counseling, even though they may not have ready access to the same resources as the regular career counseling office. A much more concerted effort must be made to integrate services to students with disabilities into the routine work of colleges and universities, including college and university career counseling programs.

The consequences of unemployment and underemployment of New Yorkers with disabilities are considerable, from both an individual and societal perspective. Income data collected by the New York State Education Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities clearly illustrate both the individual and the societal value of creating job and ca-

reer opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The personal benefits are obvious. The private earnings, public savings and tax benefits run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Given the large number of individuals with disabilities who shy away from postsecondary education, there is an obvious opportunity now to recruit a whole new group of individuals into the skilled labor market. At the same time, there is a significant opportunity for educating today's employers to the value of individuals with disabilities as potential employees. In light of today's job market, that opportunity has only been enhanced. It should be the role of each postsecondary education institution to reach out — in partnership with students with disabilities themselves — to partner with employers in tapping the rich workforce resource represented by this population of New Yorkers.

A much more concerted effort must be made to integrate services to students with disabilities into the routine work of colleges and universities, including college and university career counseling programs. . . .

Goal Five

College students with disabilities have access to the full range of strategies, programs and counseling aimed at developing knowledge and skills to assist them in achieving post-academic success, including satisfying careers and jobs.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- Colleges and universities make intentional efforts to increase the integration of services to students with disabilities into all standard aspects of career counseling and off-campus job programs, including job fairs, campus recruitment drives, internships, job shadowing and mentoring efforts.
- Colleges and universities reach out to and develop contacts with alumni who have a clear and specific interest in seeing students with disabilities succeed in the workplace; the use of alumni as mentors or in job shadowing roles would benefit both students and alumni.

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Goal Five

[T]here is a significant opportunity for educating today's employers to the value of individuals with disabilities as potential employees.

- Colleges and universities develop aggressive outreach programs to specifically market students with disabilities to employers, and develop specific mechanisms for following up with both the student and the employer on the success of the match. Part of such an effort could include setting up local councils of career counseling staff, students with disabilities and local business people to investigate both internship for credit and permanent job placement possibilities.
- In order to offer a full range of services and expertise to colleges and universities in working with students with disabilities, postsecondary education institutions form ongoing partnerships with the existing rehabilitation community. That community includes state vocational and rehabilitation agencies, agencies for the blind and visually handicapped and other existing community based organizations.
- The State Education Department ensures that the vocational rehabilitation system, in conjunction with colleges and universities, develops a systemic approach to serving eligible college students with disabilities in a timely fashion consistent with the policies adopted by the New York State Board of Regents in November 1996.
- Coordination with existing "placement committees" and local partnerships for workforce investment occurs to assist in finding employment for candidates, provide internships and/or cooperative experiences. These committees are networked across the state to allow for information exchange and the mobility of graduates.
- College and university placement offices investigate the full range of state and federal training and placement programs, such as the federal Workforce Investment Act, in order to leverage maximum resources for job placement and training.

Goal Five

- New York State's vocational rehabilitation system (VESID, CBVH, and not-for-profit rehabilitation agencies) develops formal mechanisms to work with postsecondary education institutions to provide technical assistance, support and guidance in career planning for students with disabilities.
- Colleges and universities, working in partnership with New York State's rehabilitation system, inform employers of the current federal and state employer tax incentives for employing individuals with disabilities.

Outcomes

The percentage of college students with disabilities who obtain employment through the career counseling services and programs will be the same as for students without disabilities.

The number of career counseling/placement offices that specifically recruit companies onto campuses that express interest in hiring individuals with disabilities will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of students with disabilities, either in traditional or nontraditional postsecondary education settings, who participate in internships, mentoring programs, clinical practice, field studies or other work experiences outside of class work will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of college students with disabilities who report going on to satisfying jobs and careers will increase over the next five years.

6. Regional coordination and partnerships

Discussion

Much could be accomplished statewide simply by better coordinating current programs, pooling resources and allowing institutional sharing of expertise and technology in the whole area of boosting participation of students with

Significant duplication of effort could be avoided if all stakeholders in the disabilities arena were more aware of the activities, programs and services that others were developing.

disabilities in postsecondary education. Significant duplication of effort could be avoided if all stakeholders in the disabilities arena were more aware of the activities, programs and services that others were developing.

Building on already developed regional consortia, including linkages established between local institutions of postsecondary education and local school districts, would be the quickest and most efficient process for this effort. These consortia meet on a regular basis to discuss postsecondary education, disability and transition issues.

Goal Six

The New York State postsecondary education community fosters the development of regional collaboratives and partnerships offering a full range of services and technical assistance to students with disabilities, their families and secondary and postsecondary education institutions.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- The New York State Education Department inventories and assesses existing collaboratives.
- The New York State Education Department, in partnership with the postsecondary education community, builds and improves upon existing collaborative efforts between and among postsecondary education institutions, local school districts and community based organizations. These collaboratives focus on providing regionalized approaches to ongoing assessment, career and educational counseling services, and assistive technology evaluation services to middle, junior high and high school students with disabilities as well as adults who wish to return to school.

Goal Six

- Such collaboratives work to build partnerships and coordinate programs and resources in order to allow all students and institutions ready access to information and technical assistance in such areas as financial aid and assistive technology.
- Such collaboratives share information, costs and equipment in order to ensure broadest possible access to assistive technology.
- The New York State Education Department makes available, throughout the New York education system, a full range of information on programs and coursework, including information related to universal design and access in areas from curriculum to campus facilities.

Outcome

The number of secondary and postsecondary education institutions that report a specific regional resource or partnership to which they can turn for technical advice and assistance on working with and teaching students with disabilities will increase over the next five years.

7. Accreditation and review

Discussion

Regional accrediting bodies, such as Middle States Association and the New York State Education Department, periodically review college and university programs and services. Given that formal mechanisms for review and accreditation often drive policy, practice and resource allocation on the campus, the issue of universal design and access should be included in such reviews. Although review and accreditation teams may sometimes include expertise on individuals with disabilities, there is not at this time any standard, consistent approach for accrediting bodies when it comes to assessing an institution of postsecondary education's accessibility.

Goal Seven

Goal Seven

Accreditation and review bodies continue to develop and enhance standards, policies and procedures for the comprehensive assessment of institutional effectiveness with regard to access to and diversity of programs and services to students with disabilities.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- The New York State Education Department ensures that its program review criteria and procedures continue to include expectations for institutional compliance with the concept of universal design and access to programs and services.
- The New York State Education Department and accrediting bodies such as the Middle States Association collaborate to ensure access to and diversity of programs and services to qualified students with disabilities.
- Both regional and specialized accreditation bodies assure greater attention to the implementation of existing standards regarding universal design and access, especially as they apply to diversity and students with disabilities.
- Both regional and specialized accrediting bodies ensure that review protocols include appropriate attention to orientation and training in the area of universal design and access for on-site review teams.
- The New York State Education Department and accrediting bodies develop and promulgate suggested strategies for assessing institutional effectiveness and student outcomes with regard to providing access to programs and services to eligible students with disabilities.

Outcomes

Issues of access are included in the oversight criteria used by accreditation and review bodies operating in New York State.

The percentage of programs and institutions that are reviewed favorably with regard to universal design and access will increase over the next five years.

8. Funding and financial mechanisms to enhance the educational opportunity for students with disabilities.

Discussion

As increasing numbers of students with disabilities try to go on to postsecondary education, the question of both individual and institutional readiness becomes very real. Many New York colleges and universities are unprepared to provide this new wave of students with the tools or services they need to thrive. In some instances those tools or services might include assistive or adaptive technology; in others, perhaps, it is a notetaker or sign language interpreter.

Many New York colleges and universities are unprepared to provide this new wave of students with the tools or services they need to thrive. . . .

In order to accelerate the pace at which colleges and universities meet the needs of students with disabilities, some new investment is required. In the absence of comprehensive state funding to help institutions meet the legitimate needs of students with disabilities, some colleges and universities have reallocated core financial support to such programs and services; others have made special efforts to raise donations from alumni and foundations. All too frequently, however, such funding has been inadequate.

At the same time, students with disabilities and their families frequently face higher costs directly related to education. The bottom line is that students with disabilities frequently face serious fiscal barriers to succeeding in a postsecondary education setting, in addition to the other challenges they tackle on a day-to-day basis.

Goal Eight

Goal Eight

Institutions of postsecondary education, families and students with disabilities have access to a broad array of financial tools to promote success in college.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**:

- Financial bond selling agencies, such as the Dormitory Authority of New York or other similar agencies, develop low-interest borrowing mechanisms to increase the availability of low-cost lending opportunities for colleges and universities wishing to invest in accessibility infrastructure. Access to such low-interest loans is made available to degree-granting proprietary institutions that voluntarily make access-related improvements to their campuses.
- Postsecondary education development offices more aggressively and strategically seek out corporate, foundation and alumni support for programs, scholarships and other endowments aimed at enhancing the participation of students with disabilities in education beyond high school.
- The New York State Education Department and the four sectors develop a coordinated advocacy effort to seek additional state and federal resources that colleges and universities will require to meet the demands of increased enrollment of students with disabilities.
- New York's congressional delegation and members of the state legislature are called upon to amend federal and state tax law to allow tax credits for legitimate education-related disability expenses (similar to the new federal Hope Scholarship and Lifetime Learning Credits currently available).

[S]tudents with disabilities and their families frequently face higher costs directly related to education. . . .

- New York State creates Income Protection Allowances (IPA) to recognize extraordinary disability accommodation costs. Title IV of Congressional Methodology, which sets rules for determining financial aid eligibility, is amended to take the costs associated with disabilities into account when determining income, and New York State similarly amends its formula for determining financial aid eligibility.
- The New York State Legislature supports the Regents economic need policy raising the income threshold for a family of four to $51,000 by supporting an increase in the vocational rehabilitation case service funds.
- The State Education Department seeks federal and state legislation to raise maximum loan and grant amounts in the case of such financial assistance programs as Pell grants or Perkins loans as they apply to students with disabilities to account for higher costs.
- The State Education Department identifies all financial assistance programs that are time limited (i.e., Pell and TAP grants), and seeks legislation and/or rule changes that allow for more flexible graduation schedules for students with disabilities.
- The Governor and Legislature work together to initiate a new funding program that will encourage colleges and universities across the state to make the extra effort to recognize the needs of individuals with disabilities on their campuses. Specifically, the Task Force recommends that a $15 million "Fund for the Improvement of Disability Services" be created to offer three different types of grants. The first $5 million is for unmatched "Enhancement Grants" to provide base funding for capacity building of up to $50,000 per institution, determined by the size of the institution and the number of students with disabilities

[S]tudents with disabilities frequently face serious fiscal barriers to succeeding in a postsecondary education setting,

Goal Eight

served. The second $5 million is for matching "Challenge Grants" of up to $50,000 per institution (the amount may be lower based on the number of institutions that apply) to support programmatic activities. The third $5 million is for unmatched "Incentive Grants" of up to $50,000 per institution for campuses able to increase the number of students with disabilities. Each institution develops a target goal of percentage of increase based on its current number of students with disabilities. The funds are available to every SUNY, CUNY, independent sector and degree-granting proprietary institution in New York State. The grants are flexible enough to allow individual campuses to make funding decisions in consultation with consumers of disability services, and directors/coordinators of disability services. The fund, administered by the New York State Education Department, is authorized for at least three years, increasing to $30 million in the second and third years.

Outcomes

Passage of the specific legislative initiatives outlined above will be achieved.

Endowment and private sector contributions to postsecondary education institutions that are earmarked for disability services will increase over the next five years.

Services, programs and facilities at postsecondary education institutions that are aimed at increasing educational opportunity for students with disabilities will be expanded and enhanced statewide over the next five years.

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the number of colleges and universities that avail themselves of the "Fund for Improvement of Disability Services" grants will increase.

9. Management structure for continued collaboration and implementation

Discussion

The focused energy and creativity of cooperating university sectors coordinated within the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities should not be lost. Given a continuing need for data collection and evaluation, the landmark cross-sector partnership represented by the Task Force should be formalized. Additionally, leaders of secondary education should be brought into this landmark effort in a formal way, and included in a standing committee representing the leadership of the educational community to serve as a focal point for continued research, outcomes monitoring and public policy action in the area of disabilities and postsecondary education. This standing committee will focus the continued attention needed to maintain the Task Force's forward momentum. The committee could naturally draw on the research capabilities of all of New York State's postsecondary education institutions.

Given a continuing need for data collection and evaluation, the landmark cross-sector partnership represented by the Task Force should be formalized.

Goal Nine

New York State, through the Board of Regents, establishes a standing Steering Committee made up of leadership of the four university sectors, the State Education Department, and leaders in secondary education to guide ongoing research, policy development and assessment.

Toward this end, the Task Force recommends the following **strategies**

- The Board of Regents appoints a steering committee made up of representatives from all university sectors, the secondary education community, the disability community, business and government.
- The Steering Committee monitors progress on the outcomes outlined in the report. The Com-

Goal Nine

mittee also regularly reviews the outcomes for currency and relevance, and considers adjusting outcomes as they gather baseline data on performance.

- The Steering Committee initiates the collection and evaluation of standardized demographic and educational data on students with disabilities.
- The Steering Committee develops the capacity to measure more meaningful outcomes for students with disabilities, including information on job placement, time on the job, salary, job satisfaction and employer satisfaction.
- The Steering Committee initiates an analysis of factors contributing to the success of students with disabilities and the extent to which success is related to specific programs or academic experience.
- The Steering Committee investigates why larger percentages of students with disabilities enroll in two-year institutions than four-year. The Committee also identifies which two-year colleges are particularly successful in encouraging students with disabilities to pursue bachelor degrees.
- The Steering Committee continually evaluates funding mechanisms with the goal of developing data-based funding strategies, including data concerning the expenditure of funds for students with disabilities in postsecondary education, coordinated to the greatest extent possible with current federal and state data gathering requirements.
- The Steering Committee appoints, on an as-needed basis, expert panels to guide future policy discussions.

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Outcome

The Committee will be named within six months of the formal adoption of the Task Force Report.

Conclusion

The agenda set forth in *Postsecondary Education and Individuals with Disabilities: Recommendations to New York State for Strategies to Increase Access and Opportunity* is an ambitious one, but its goals are clearly achievable. Since passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals with disabilities – and our society in general – have proven that the fullest possible enfranchisement of all who have the skill and ability to participate in society benefits all of us. With the release of this report, New York State will raise the issue of access for individuals with disabilities to postsecondary education to the leadership level. This is more than the right thing to do; it is also the necessary thing to do. New York must maximize the talent and energy of every segment of its population. It is time to ensure that full educational opportunity be extended to all New Yorkers, as New York continues to build its reputation as a state that understands the value of education and the necessity of equal access to education for all.

It is time to ensure that full educational opportunity be extended to all New Yorkers, as New York continues to build its reputation as a state that understands the value of education and the necessity of equal access to education for all.

Obviously, going on to postsecondary education is not a realistic option for all individuals with disabilities any more than it is for all individuals without disabilities. But New York is missing an opportunity. With increasing numbers of students with disabilities graduating from high school, it is time to focus, in a comprehensive way, on ensuring that all those who wish to can continue their education. There is significant room for progress; it is time to forge ahead.

The goals and strategies outlined in the report are comprehensive. Implementing the strategies will take work and commitment. But the potential payoff is apparent: an enriched academic world, enriched lives and an enriched and talented workforce ready to contribute to New York's economy, society and civic life.

In the years to come, the outcomes outlined in the report will be closely monitored. It is the expectation of the Task Force that all stakeholders – institutions of postsecondary education from all sectors, business, government, families and individuals with disabilities themselves – will coalesce around the strategies listed in the report, each taking their piece and building it into a comprehensive system of accessible postsecondary education and career opportunity for all New Yorkers. In doing so, the Task Force expects that New York State will become a national model: a model of commitment to full educational and career opportunity for all.

PART II

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
BACKGROUND

The positive impact of postsecondary education on individuals with disabilities is well documented and profound. According to a U.S. Education Department report, students with disabilities who successfully complete four years of college can expect virtually the same positive career and income outcomes as students without disabilities. According to an analysis of the lifetime earning benefits that accrue to those who complete college, reported in the March 1998 edition of *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, those students with four years of college on average can expect lifetime earnings of more than $2 million, compared to $1.3 million for those who do not obtain college degrees. One statement in the document stands out: "The only thing more expensive than going to college is not going to college." Other studies confirm that assertion. According to *Disability Agenda*, the quarterly publication of the National Organization on Disability (NOD), individuals with disabilities with 12 years of education or less can expect to earn just over $19,000 annually, compared to $45,000 for those with 16 years of education or more. As the NOD publication notes: "Greater educational attainment is perhaps the most powerful route to higher employment and earning levels for people with disabilities."

While an education and a higher income are good for individuals with disabilities, they are also good for society at large. According to the New York State Education Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), individuals with disabilities placed in jobs in State Fiscal Year 1999 made almost $205 million in first year earnings, saving the public almost $23 million in public assistance expenditures. It is not hard to extrapolate from these figures that hundreds of millions of dollars in income and public savings are in play as we consider policies and programs to increase enroll-

ment by individuals with disabilities into postsecondary education.

It should be noted that the benefits of postsecondary education apply equally to returning students as well as younger students. While it is critical that schools work closely with younger students in building a bridge to postsecondary education, national data tell us that nearly one-quarter – 23 percent – of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education are 40 years old or older, twice the average for students without disabilities. It is equally important that policies and programs aimed at increasing participation in postsecondary education be focused on those students who may have been away from high school for some time, or who took longer than four years to complete high school.

In spite of the obvious benefits to all stakeholders of ensuring greater participation in postsecondary education by students with disabilities, troubling statistics highlight the need for an enhanced commitment to ensuring that greater numbers of qualified students enroll in and graduate from postsecondary education institutions. According to a U.S. Department of Education statistical survey, nationally 57 percent of eighth grade students with disabilities said they aspired to a bachelor's degree, compared with 72 percent of students without disabilities. There is a steady improvement in the performance of school-age students with disabilities in New York State on key standardized tests, indicating that many are more than capable of doing the work. There is every reason to believe that this scholastic improvement will translate into higher numbers of students with disabilities continuing on to postsecondary education.

For New York State, there is a huge opportunity to tap into the thousands of high school graduates with disabilities who will be qualified to undertake college-level study. In an era when competition for the best and brightest is particularly keen, New York State cannot afford to let those thousands slip away. The state must meet its obligation to open up educational horizons to all high school graduates statewide. There is no reason why New York cannot reach

and exceed the national average percentages of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education.

Whatever the investment, whatever changes in policy, law or attitude might be required, individuals with disabilities have long proved that they are vital contributors to our economy, communities and society. It is time for New York - schools, families of individuals with disabilities, students with disabilities themselves, not-for-profit organizations, colleges, universities and government - to begin the necessary work in order to reap the benefits of increased involvement of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education.

APPENDIX B
DATA AND CHARTS

Postsecondary Education and Students with Disabilities

HIGH SCHOOL POPULATION

Who They Are

The enrollment of students ages 12 to 21 who are receiving special education services was 198,999 on December 1, 1997. During this school year (1997-98), 21,935 students receiving special education services exited the secondary education programs in New York State. Of this number, 9,405 exited with a Regents, local or high school equivalency (HSE) diploma. The number of students receiving special education services who earned a Regents diploma increased for the twelfth consecutive year, with an increase from the previous year of 4.6 percent. The remaining students either dropped out of school, exited with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) diploma or aged out of the system at age 21.

Students with disabilities who are exiting special education programs are primarily classified as having learning disabilities. In 1997-98, students with disabilities, ages 12 to 21, who were in special education programs were classified as follows:

64.2% - learning disabilities
14.9% - emotional disturbances
5.4% - mental retardation
4.5% - multiple disabilities
4.0% - speech impairments
3.6% - other health impairments

1.9% - autism, visual impairments, orthopedic impairments, deaf-blindness and traumatic brain injury
1.5% - deaf or hard of hearing

These classifications are defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for the purpose of providing special education services to age 21.

Where They Expect To Go (After High School)

In 1997-98, 5,446 students with disabilities who completed high school, and for whom postsecondary plans data were submitted, planned to enroll in a four-year, two-year or other college. An additional 3,387 planned to enter employment or go into military service. Among the students with disabilities who earned high school diplomas, the percentage planning to enter college was 37.8 percent while 23.5 percent planned to enter employment or military service.

POPULATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Who They Are

In 1997 (the latest year for which data are available), the number of self-identified students with disabilities who were enrolled in institutions of higher education was 30,889, representing 3.1 percent of the total college enrollment. This number depicts an increase of 53.7 percent since 1991. This increase occurred during a period of time when the total enrollment in higher education institutions decreased.

College students with disabilities who are enrolled in higher education programs are primarily classified as having learning disabilities (see Figure 1). In 1997, college students with disabilities were reported as having the following disabilities:

45.9% - learning disabilities
24.8% - other health impairments
7.7% - mobility impairmentsmental retardation
7.2% - acoustical impairments
6.0% - emotional disturbances
3.9% - visual impairments
2.6% - orthopedic impairments
1.0% - traumatic brain injuries
0.8% - speech

These classifications are defined for reporting on the Higher Education Data System (HEDS).

Where They Go

Students with disabilities are attending the State University of New York (SUNY), City University of New York (CUNY), independent colleges and universities and degree-granting proprietary colleges. Of the total number of college students with disabilities in 1997, 14,358 individu-

als were attending SUNY colleges and universities; 7,013 individuals were attending CUNY colleges and universities; 9,024 individuals were attending independent colleges and universities; and 404 were enrolled in degree-granting proprietary colleges (see Figure 2).

A large percentage of college students with disabilities attend community colleges, which accounts for only 19 percent of the institutions of higher education in New York State. Of the 30,889 enrolled students with disabilities (see Figure 3), 10,596 (more than 34 percent) are enrolled in community colleges.

Figure 1
Enrollment of Students With Disabilities in Institutions of Higher Education by Disability Type

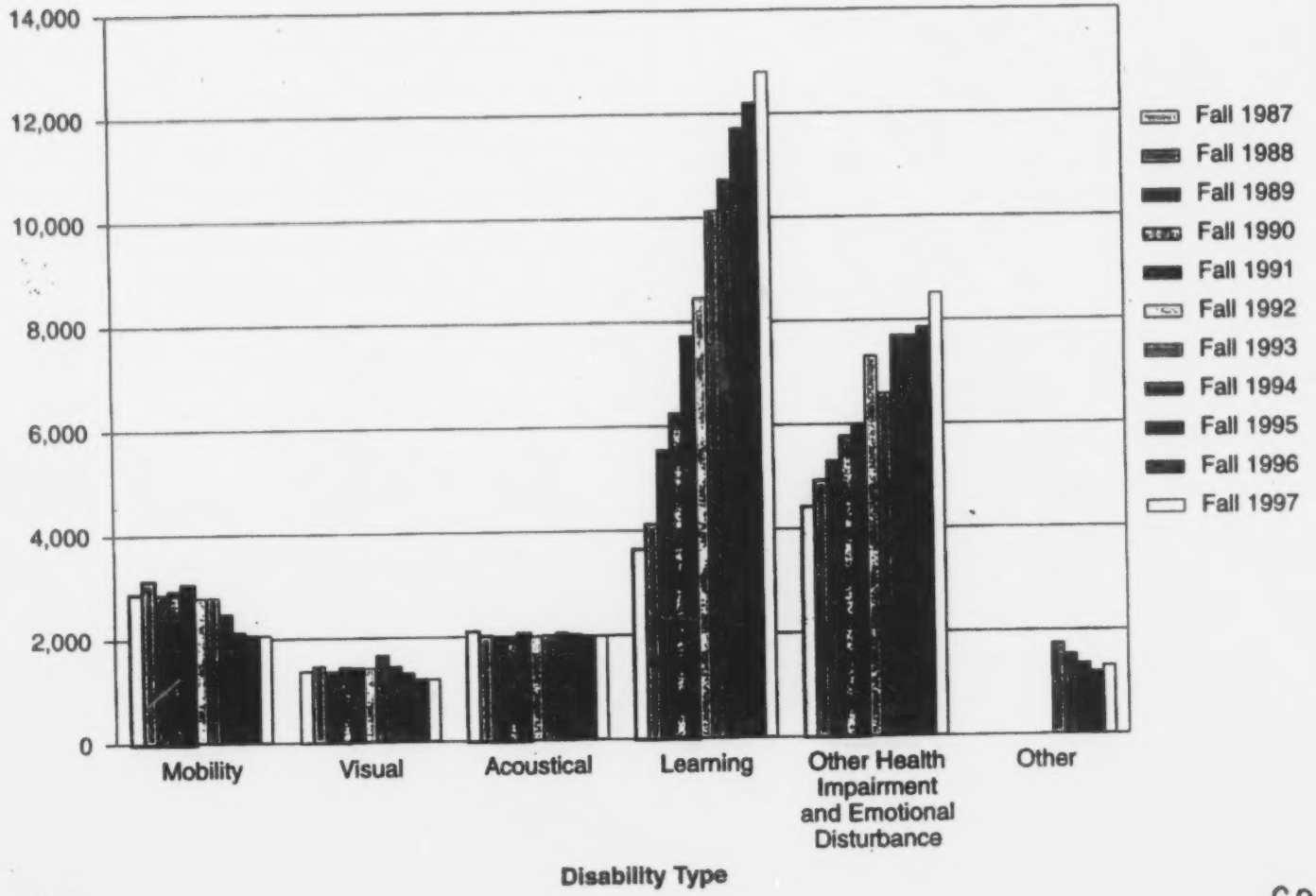


Figure 2
Enrollment of Students With Disabilities in Postsecondary Programs

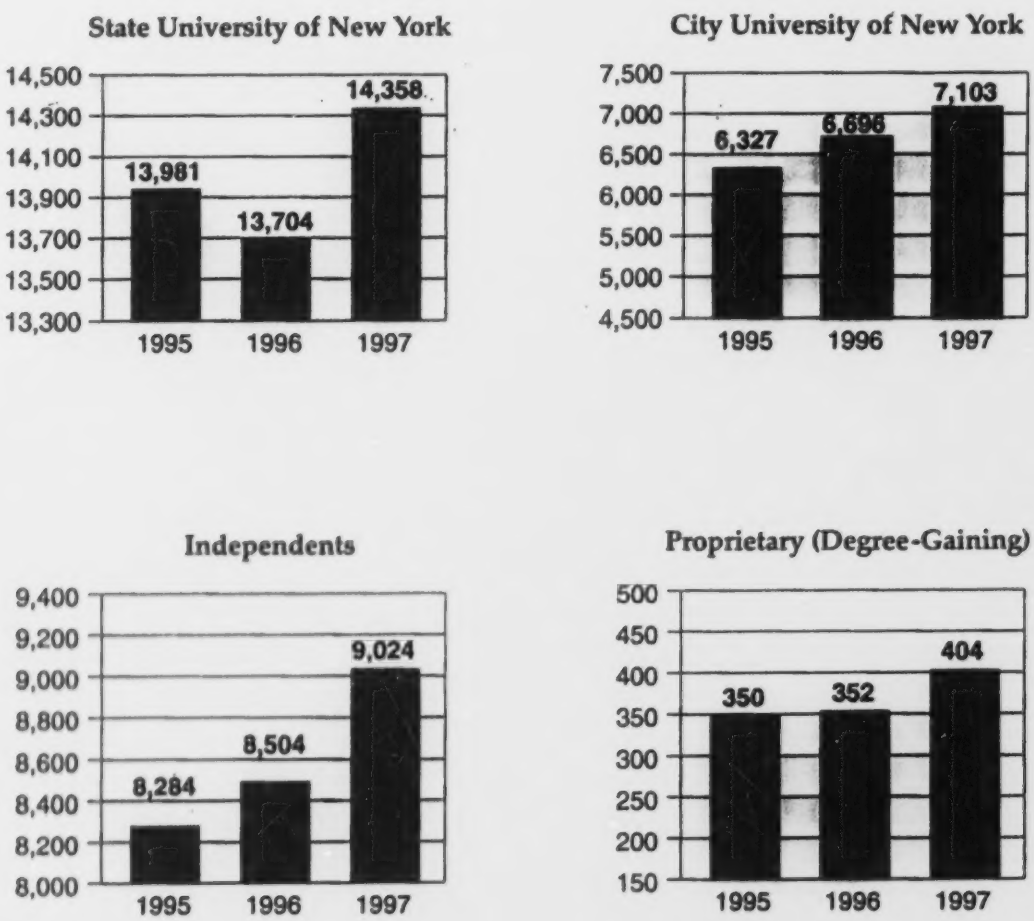
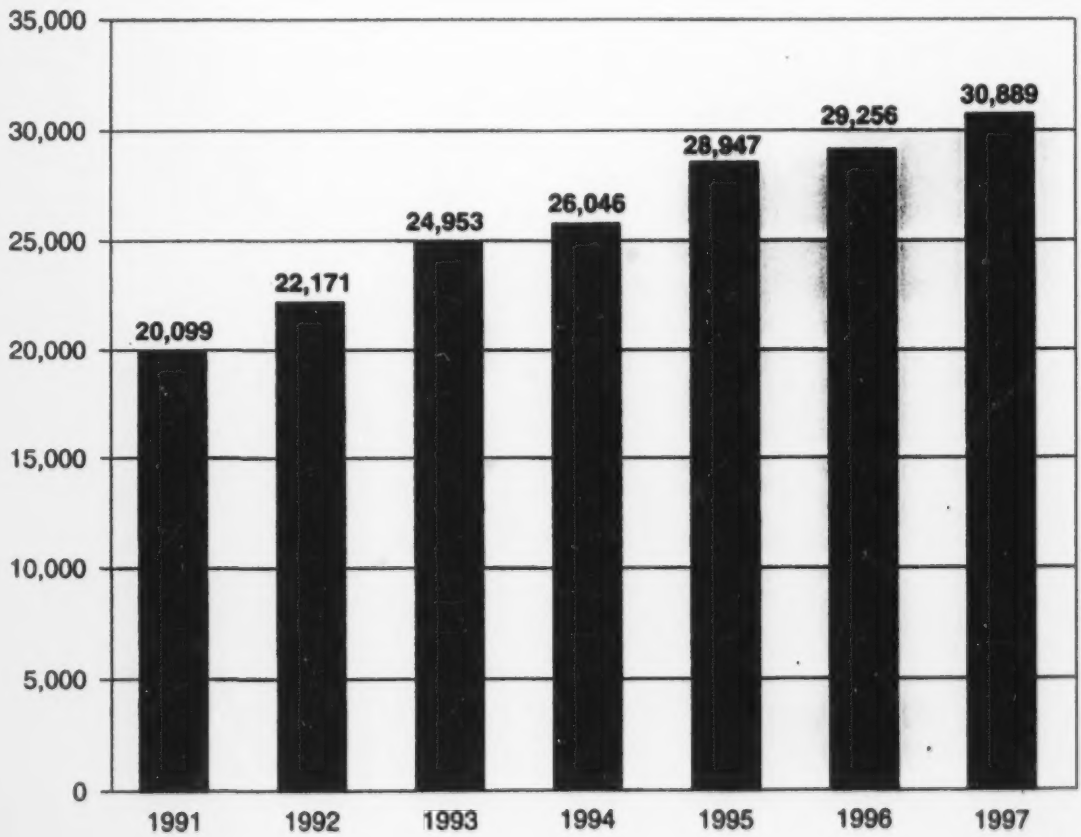


Figure 3
Enrollment of Students With Disabilities in Institutions of Higher Education As a Percentage of Total Enrollment



APPENDIX C
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APPENDIX D
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  Disability, Access, Information and Support
- Dr. Howard Simmons
  Professor
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- Dr. Dallas Martin
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  Plymouth, MA
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  Director of the Research and Training Center on Economic Opportunity
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  Pennsylvania State University
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  Wright State University
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- Dennis Golladay, President
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- Phillip Williams, President
  Utica School of Commerce

Appendix G
Guidelines to Allow for the Transfer of Assistive Technology When a Student Moves From School Jurisdiction to Higher Education, Other Human Services Agency or Employment

The State of New York

Office of the State Comptroller
H. Carl McCall

State Education Department
Richard P. Mills

July 1996

TO: District Superintendents
Presidents of Boards of Education
Superintendents of Schools
VESID District Office Managers
New York City Board of Education
Principals of Public Schools
Directors of Special Education
Chairpersons of Committees on Special Education
School District Business Officers
SETRC Project Directors and Training Specialists

FROM: H. Carl McCall, State Comptroller
Richard P. Mills, Commissioner of Education

SUBJECT: Guidelines to Allow for the Transfer of Assistive Technology When a Student Moves from School Jurisdiction to Higher Education, Other Human Services Agency or Employment

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify issues associated with the transfer of technology property to support students with disabilities as they transfer from local educational agencies to other settings or opportunities.

Historical Background:

In 1991, the State Board of Regents established a Select Commission on Disability. The focus of the Commission was on services to people with disabilities under the auspices of the Board of Regents and the State Education Department. The Commission also made recommendations regarding services that might cross agency lines, including the coordination of such services, and suggested appropriate actions to be taken by the State.

The Commission, in its 1993 final report, made 13 specific recommendations. One of the recommendations dealt with the Appropriate Use and Transfer of Assistive Technology.

It read as follows:

The Regents should focus special attention on the issue of technology, review the manner and extent to which Assistive Technology is currently delivered and used, and remove impediments to the appropriate use and transfer of such technology. A strategy should be developed to enable transfer of Assistive Technology as an individual with disabilities moves through his or her life course.

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A task force was established to examine and make recommendations to eliminate barriers to transferring Assistive Technology between agencies. The task force's membership includes representatives from schools, BOCES, and higher education institutions. As a result of recommendations from this task force, the Education Department and the Office of State Comptroller have conferred and agreed to the distribution of this memorandum.

Definition:

Assistive technology is defined *as an item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.*

Issue:

School districts periodically provide assistive technology to students with disabilities as part of their Individualized Education Program. This technology is often adapted to that individual and may be of little value to others. However, the technology often continues to be necessary for that individual when they leave school. A number of school districts have expressed a reluctance to sell technology property when a student leaves that district. It was determined that this is due partly to an uneasiness over selling an item, for a price they set, to interested parties. The greater reason for reluctance has been an uncertainty over how the Office of State Comptroller will treat these actions, should there be an audit.

Resolution:

While statutory provisions address the obligations of local school officials, there are no specific provisions which address the ability to transfer such technology, whether hardware or software. However, Boards of Education do have clear authority to manage the general affairs of the district, and this includes the authority to dispose of property the district no longer needs. Boards of Education need to consider the following aspects in preparing to dispose of assistive technology. These areas focus on accountability for the disposition and transfer of property. These are also the areas that auditors will be interested in if they review the disposition of property.

Surplus Nature of the Property: School officials are routinely called upon in their day-to-day responsibilities to decide whether items are no longer usable in their present condition and, therefore, need replacing, or even if usable, whether they are no longer needed for the district's own purposes. The situation is no different when the items involved are technological in nature. Generally, there should be no known, immediate or currently foreseeable use of the property for the district's needs. If that condition is met, the district may regard the item(s) as surplus, and therefore disposable.

Disposition at Fair Market Value: School officials are always required to make a good faith effort to obtain an item's actual value when disposing of property owned by the district. Determining their fair market value, however, may pose some difficulty for school officials who are required to set that value before there may be a proper transfer of ownership. Not all items have a ready market, nor is there a certain, established method for determining value.

This may be particularly so when the property consists of technology items provided for a specific student's use and the student has used it for a long time. School officials should reasonably consider such things as the age and condition of surplus items in attempting to assess their value. School officials should be able to show how the value of an item has been determined. As long as the school district or BOCES receives reasonable value for transferring its surplus property, the transfer may be made to anyone; i.e., another school district, BOCES, postsecondary institution, human service agency, employer, or private individual. There is no need to pursue bidding requirements for the disposition to occur.

Accountability Issues: Decision-making in this area is clearly the legal responsibility of the appropriate school officials. When an audit is conducted, auditors from the Office of the State Comptroller will look to see available documentation which demonstrates that the school officials considered the relevant factors of whether the property in question was deemed not usable by the district, e.g., whether it is surplus, and whether a proper attempt was made to place and obtain a reasonable or fair monetary value on the property when it was transferred. Where the circumstances make it difficult to establish that value, the school district or BOCES attempts to obtain help will be considered. That is, when a district or BOCES finds it cannot easily establish the value of an item or items, its request for advice and the advice received from a source such as another district which may have had similar experience, may well be regarded as a sufficient demonstration of a proper effort to set the value of the property.

Questions concerning this topic should be directed to the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Technology Coordination Unit at (518) 486-4609.

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